DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 178 660 UD 019 935

AUTHOR Peter, Karl
TITLE The Myth of Multiculturalism and Other Political Fables.
PUB DATE Oct 79
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at the Canadian Ethnic Studies Association Conference (Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, October 11-13, 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Biculturalism; *Bilingualism; Cultural Isolation; *Cultural Pluralism; Culture Conflict; *Ethnic Groups; *Government (Administrative Body); *Political Issues; Political Power; Power Structure; *Public Policy; Social Influences
IDENTIFIERS *Canada

ABSTRACT

This paper proceeds from the hypothesis that the bilingual and multicultural policy of the Canadian government was: (1) an appeasement policy toward a revitalized Quebec and a containment policy regarding its claim to political power; and (2) a device to legitimize the continued dominance of the ruling English speaking elite at a time when its position was threatened by Quebec's claim to political power on the one hand, and by the economic and cultural vitality of ethnic groups on the other. According to this hypothesis, the government's policy offered ethnic individuals an illusion of cultural freedom, while denying them any real power. It is argued that when different social classes and interest groups in Quebec have successfully organized to achieve their political, economic, and cultural goals, the government's policy of multiculturalism, which has for so long dominated the life of ethnic group members, will no longer be applicable, and that ethnic groups must concern themselves with building a power base from which they can influence the course that Canada will take in the future. (Author/EB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

NOV 9 - 1979

ED178660

THE MYTH OF MULTICULTURALISM AND OTHER POLITICAL FABLES

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Karl Peter
Professor of Sociology
Simon Fraser University
Burnaby, B.C.

Paper presented at the Canadian Ethnic Studies Association Conference
Vancouver, B.C., October 11th to 13th, 1979.

UD019935

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Karl A. Peter

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Since the day in 1971 when the former Prime Minister Trudeau introduced a policy of multiculturalism in the House of Commons, Canadian social scientists have done a great deal of research in an effort to shed some light on the complexities of this policy. Although no comprehensive review of this research is intended here, it might serve the purposes of this paper to consider the positions taken by some leading scholars in the field.

Jean Burnet in her paper "The Definition of Multiculturalism in a Bilingual Framework"[1] presents a rather excellent review of the multitudes and the ambiguities of meanings that can be associated with this policy. "Ethnicity" and "multiculturalism" are relatively new concepts and still on the move drawing their definitions from various theoretical frameworks in combination with different empirical settings. It appears that over the last five or six years, a trend in Canadian ethnic studies developed, by which "ethnicity" and "multiculturalism" seem to settle for a more or less consistent set of meanings. This trend is characterized by emphasizing such concepts as "ethnic identity," "emerging ethnic boundaries," "ethnic boundary markers," "ethnic recognition," to mention only the more important ones. Perhaps Jean Burnet has tried to give the term multiculturalism the most precise definition when she says that:

> Multiculturalism within a bilingual framework can work if it is interpreted as is intended - that is, as encouraging those members of ethnic groups who want to do so to maintain a proud sense of the contribution of their own group to Canadian society. Interpreted in this way, it becomes something very North American; voluntary marginal differentiation among peoples who are equal participants in the society. If it is interpreted in a second way - as enabling various peoples to transfer foreign cultures and language as living wholes into a new place and time - multiculturalism is doomed.[2]

This is a most remarkable statement in what it says and in what it avoids saying. It makes the assumption that there is such a thing as Canadian society which

exists more or less independently of ethnic groups and toward whose development ethnic groups are encouraged to make their various contributions.

This assumption is a staple of Canadian immigration policy and was from there transferred into the bilingual and bicultural debate. It is contained in almost every major announcement on the policy of multiculturalism and referred to by then Prime Minister Trudeau when he introduced the policy of multiculturalism in the House of Commons.

But could one not say that it is equally or perhaps more justifiable to claim that the interaction of various ethnic groups, including the multi-ethnic English speakers and the multi-ethnic French speakers in fact does constitute Canadian society? Why is there always the assumption that ethnic groups somehow are outside the mainstream of Canadian society; that they need to make selected contributions, etc.? To what does this concept Canadian society refer, independent of a multitude of local and regional ethnic groups which more or less successfully struggle to form a political entity?

There is the reference in Burnet's paper to "voluntary marginal differentiation who are equal participants in society." No differentiation in Canadian history with the exception of race was less voluntary than ethnicity. Nor have the unequal aspects of such differentiation appreciably changed during the last few decades.

Finally, Jean Burnet draws a dichotomy between a workable definition of "multiculturalism" within a bilingual framework and "foreign cultures and languages as living wholes" which she considers to be doomed. One surely would want to hope that neither the Hutterites nor the Indians nor the Eskimos will be doomed in Canada, but that there will be room enough and tolerance enough to assure their further existence. The dichotomy between "multiculturalism" that

will work and "multiculturalism" that is doomed is a false one because the empirical reality of Canada is such that all shades of graduation between these limiting types are presented in Canadian society. Nor are these cultures living wholes, but more or less completed cultural fractions, integrated into similar fractions that form Canadian society.

That "we" and "they" syndrome, the notion of Canadian society on the one hand and the existence of ethnic groups as something independent of this society on the other is a most devious concept. It relegates the role of ethnic groups to that of contributors of quaint cultural practices and upholders of individual identities while at the same time it denies them a political and economic reality in Canadian life. The "individual's freedoms" as Prime Minister Trudeau said in the House of Commons when introducing the policy of multiculturalism "would be hampered if he were locked for life within a particular cultural compartment by the accident of birth or language."[3] This statement only makes sense when it is assumed, that somehow "cultural compartments" in the form of ethnic groups must be regarded as more or less detached social isolates from which individual ethnics can graduate into mainstream Canadian society by acquiring the proper attributes, like language, etc.

What is presented here as a liberal policy: that individuals are free to graduate into mainstream Canadian society if they so wish, is in fact a policy of "ethnic group containment." Ethnic groups are steered away from any contact with political and economic powers and are neutralized in their role as providers of individual satisfaction, adding a touch of color to the otherwise drab Canadian sociocultural scene.

The denial of any economic and political significance to ethnic groups which is the essence of the government's policy on multiculturalism has been adopted

by Canadian sociologists and has largely prevented them from analyzing multiculturalism in terms of power and politics.

At times some commentators came tantalizingly close to such an analysis only to shy away at the end. In wondering what contribution multiculturalism could make to the developing Canadian society, Jean Burnet almost as an afterthought to her paper (mentioned above), says the following:

> A clue to the contribution that a policy of multiculturalism or ethnic diversity can make to a more varied, dynamic and equalitarian society is found in a definition of discrimination quoted by Glazer and Moynihan from an unnamed U.S. Army colonel, director of Army Equal Opportunity Programs: "discrimination is the relationship between two groups of people, wherein one group has defined the rules by which the other groups must act.[4]

Jean Burnet expresses the hope that the policy of multiculturalism may help to change that:

> By defining individual identity, by suggesting forms of organization and specific demands, by ... suggesting a somewhat different accommodation by the political order to ethnic difference the policy may result in Canadians of all ethnic origins and all ethnic affiliations together setting the rules by which all will have to act.[5]

With all deference to Glazer and Moynihan their unnamed U.S. Army colonel was quite wrong. A relationship between two groups of people wherein one group has defined the rules by which the other group must act, is not discrimination — it is political power. As Max Weber said, in shorter and somewhat more precise terms: "political power is the probability of imposing one's will upon the behaviour of others." And he continued, "politics is the striving to share power or striving to influence the distribution of power among groups within a state." Jean Burnet comes close to defining multiculturalism in terms of power and politics; she suggests the means by which such politics can be conducted, and then decides to let the matter fade away.

Wsevolod W. Isajiw in his Presidential Address to the Canadian Ethnic Studies Association Conference in 1975[6] addressed himself to the problem of ethnicity in a technological society. He touched on the problem of ethnicity and power when he said that the re-emergence and persistence of ethnicity in Canada and the United States were not to be explained by the search for ethnic identity alone. There must be other factors operating in society at large to produce this form of ethnic persistence.

He quotes Daniel Bell who claims that ethnicity:

> ... is best understood not as a primordial phenomenon in which deeply held identities have to re-emerge, but as a strategic choice by individuals who, in other circumstances would choose other group membership as a means of gaining some power and privilege.[7]

Wsevolod W. Isajiw draws attention to the occupational competition among socially mobile members of ethnic groups. Increased social mobility, he says, may evoke increased awareness of ethnicity and a rediscovery of ethnic identity.

But again, this is as far as Isajiw is willing to go in the analysis of power and ethnicity. The rest of the paper is taken up in claiming that ethnicity is the retention of traits from the remote ethnic past used to establish individual identities in defence against the anonymization pressure of the technological culture.

The debate over individual ethnic identity and related concepts it seems has occupied a central stage during the last 10 years, and by doing so has relegated the analysis of ethnicity in terms of power and politics to the periphery. This, however, is not the case with respect to the Marxists of various persuasions who bring into this analysis the limitations that derive from Marxian theory. The concept of the state as the executive committee of the ruling class; the definition of its function as the protector and regulator

of the Capitalist mode of production and the guarantor of the accumulation of capital creates a framework which is deemed inapplicable by many liberal sociologists to the analysis of the state in terms of the evolution of liberty, of law, individual freedom and social security. But Glazer and Moynihan take issue with Karl Marx and his followers who claim that interest should guide rational men to social action; and that interest was determined by social class position.

They say:

> One element thus that is new in the present situation is that interest is pursued effectively by ethnic groups today as well as by interest defined groups: indeed, perhaps it can be pursued even more effectively. As against class-based forms of social identification and conflict - which of course continue to exist - we have been surprised by the persistence and salience of ethnic-based forms of social identification and conflict.[8]

And Bernardo Berdichewsky investigating the case of the Machupe Indians of Chile came to the conclusion that " ... Class consciousness and ethnic consciousness are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but when both exist, their destiny is to combine."[9]

The reluctance of many leading liberal Canadian sociologists to deal with ethnicity in terms of power and politics it seems is proportionate to their commitment to the policies of bilingualism and multiculturalism, and ultimately to the concept of Canadian unity as proposed by the former Liberal government. And there are very good reasons for taking such a position. The spectre of confrontation and conflict created by the possibility of an independent Quebec once more has laid bare the fragile character of the Canadian Confederation. Little it seems could be gained by investigating the mobilization of power among ethnic groups and thereby complicating the situation further.

But isn't it rather remarkable, that nine years after the B. and B. report

was first tabled in the House of Commons, the Task Force on Canadian Unity had to be created, which felt it necessary to deal with those factors which the B. and B. report desperately tried to avoid — the nature and distribution of political powers in Canada? And isn't it remarkable that this report for the first time includes regional references which to a large extent overlap with ethnic interests? It seems that neither French Canada nor Canada's diverse ethnic groups could be pacified by the bilingual-multicultural policy. The question is why?

This paper proceeds from the hypothesis, that the bilingual and multicultural policy as formulated by the Canadian government was intended to serve the following political purposes:

(1) The policy of bilingualism was at once an appeasement policy toward a revitalised Quebec and a containment policy regarding its claim to political power.

(2) The policy of multiculturalism served as a device to legitimize the continued dominance of the ruling English speaking elite and secure its position in society at a time, when its position was threatened by Quebec's claim to political power on the one hand and by the economic and cultural vitality of ethnic groups on the other hand.

The attempt to obscure the French Canadian challenge to political power and deflect it into linguistic and cultural directions constitutes the very essence of the B. and B. report.

The key terms of reference, "To recommend what steps should be taken to develop the Canadian Confederation on the basis of an equal partnership between the founding races"[10] insofar as the last part of the statement is concerned, borders on myth-making. The notion of the "founding races" condescendingly evokes the ancestral myth of national origins, of heroic deeds and deep emotional happenings. It obscures the fact, that Canada was founded on military conquest

followed by one hundred years of colonial administration. Its founding as a Confederation in 1867 never involved a freedom of choice by French Canada. A choice given to the French Canadians, as Lord Durham observed in 1840, just was not possible because of the existence of an English minority in Quebec whose privileged position needed protection either from the Colonial Office then or the Canadian anglophone community today.

The reference to the development of "the Canadian Confederation on the basis of an equal partnership" conceivably could refer to a redistribution of political powers on the basis of equality between French and English Canadians as often demanded by francophone politicians. The B. & B. Commission, however, quickly diffused this possible interpretation and deflected it into linguistic and cultural forms of equality. They wrote:

> As we understand our mandate this equality should be the equal partnership not only of the two peoples which founded Confederation but also of each of their respective languages and cultures. What we are aiming for, then is the equal partnership of all who speak either language and participate in either culture, whatever their ethnic origin.[11]

With this interpretation the meaning of an equal partnership became depoliticized on the one hand and culturalized and individualized on the other. Insofar as the terms of the B. & B. Commission contained a promise of a redistribution of political powers within Confederation the interpretation which the Commission attached to these terms removed this promise. Its final recommendations therefore contained measures to establish linguistic and cultural forms of partnership and equality but refrained from touching the political power structure.

The intended aim of the bilingual and bicultural report was not to develop the political aspects of the Canadian Confederation on a new basis but to devise a containment policy which could conceivably intercept the political reassertion

of Quebec and deflect it into linguistic and cultural fields. As the continuous crisis over the nature of the Canadian Confederation indicates and as the now recognized necessity of constitutional reform demonstrates, the containment policy of the B. and B. report was already obsolete before it could be implemented. What it achieved, was to keep the public focussed on its pros and cons until the very day when Rene Levesque was voted into office and began to speak the language of politics and power.

To appease Quebec by way of a bilingual and bicultural policy and thereby eclipse its aspirations to greater political powers was an urgent Federal response to the sudden events of Quebec's quiet revolution following the death of Duplessis. The third component of this policy, multiculturalism, was mainly intended to buy off the compliance of ethnic groups and thereby legitimize and justify the B. and B. policy. This was achieved by modernizing the traditional conception of ethnicity as an element standing somewhat outside the mainstream of Canadian society, from which individuals were expected to graduate in order to become full fledged Canadians. Such a concept of ethnicity was superbly suited to legitimize bilingualism and biculturalism as the cultural forum of all Canadians and to classify ethnic groups as vestibules to the individual's entry into such a forum. At the same time, this concept of ethnicity ruled out the view that Canadian society could possibly consist of a conglomerate of ethnic groups overlapping with the class system who are in competition over power, status and resources such that the particular process by which such conflict is conducted in fact constitutes the essence of Canadian social reality. In other words, bilingualism, biculturalism and multiculturalism were based on a model of ethnic acquiescence to the rule of the dominant groups, forestalling all ethnic self-assertion in the form of ethnic interest groups as Glazer and

Moynihan observed.

That ethnic groups needed to be contained within the traditional conceptual framework of Canadian immigration policy had become all the more pressing at a time when the two dominant cultural groups faced an ever larger, more sophisticated and influential immigrant population which, although not strong and united enough to challenge the respective dominance of these groups, nevertheless managed to bring about local and regional cultural transformation far-reaching enough to pose a threat to the French and English cultural core.

Since the days when Clifford Sifton imported European peasants in sheepskins to develop the Canadian West: to have them lay the foundations of Canadian corporate wealth and to make them pay off the mortgages which Confederation and the building of the railways had extracted from the land and its people, the policy of "institutional intimidation" had served as an effective manipulative device to keep the ethnics at bay. The notion of the huddled, ignorant masses of Europe, fleeing from tyranny and persecution who were given the privilege to partake in free Canadian institutions bestowed on the Dominion by the English was designed to impress on the immigrant a feeling of awe, unworthiness and inferiority and elicited an attitude of generosity, superiority and condescension among the anglo-saxon groups.

The rapid loss of their native cultures was forced on these immigrants by the staple economy in combination with the settlement patterns of the Homestead Act, implemented in the West by Macdonald "for the purposes of the Dominion." There was little doubt that these so-called purposes of the Dominion served the interests of the anglophone merchant elite of Ontario and Quebec. But while the immigrants were losing their native cultures on the one hand they were kept from

fully participating in the anglo-saxon institutions on the other hand. This created a situation where the anglophone inhabitants of Canada were enjoying a three generational headstart in the control of political and economic powers. This initial advantage was built into the Canadian party structure, its ideology, and its operational assumptions and has not appreciably changed to this day.

Only a small ethnic elite whose co-optation by the dominant group proved helpful to manipulate the immigrant population was allowed to pass. While in liberal theory any ethnic individual was free to advance into the fold of the dominant cultures, the attitudinal and behavioral barriers erected around them made this impossible for the majority of ethnic individuals. As a result, ethnic individuals could only advance at a pace very much tied to the advancement of the ethnic group to which they belonged. Competition for institutional powers on the part of ethnic groups therefore must be seen as a struggle for recognition, status and privilege in Canada designed to let the ethnic individual share the benefits of the more privileged groups. In this sense ethnicity is an opportunistic response to societal conditions which can not be separated from other responses which also have a bearing on the problem. Social class position and regional inequalities together with ethnicity, therefore, form a package which if applied to diverse empirical realities in Canada, might show different proportions and magnitudes in regard to these three variables but which under given empirical conditions merge into a total response for the removal of social inequities.

The "institutional intimidation" of ethnic groups proved highly successful in controlling the struggle of ethnics for institutional powers. It is interesting to note that the founding of the CCF was possible on the basis of English socialism, merging with Western Canadian social class positions and regional interests.

Even the ideology of Social Credit had an English ideological base and after the Charisma of Aberhart passed away was pretty much controlled by anglo-saxons.

With the exception of tiny Communist factions who addressed themselves to ethnic individuals, ethnic groups in Canada were never allowed to organize their interests and carry them into the Canadian party system. An intimidated and diverse ethnic population exposed to the exercise of patronage on all levels of government and being continuously robbed of its leaders through co-optation by the existing powers had no possibility of organizing itself and formulating its interests.

It was not before the third generation of immigrants had worked itself into the Canadian social structure and reached a level of moderate status and prestige, that a competitive power struggle could get under way that had any chance of success. This struggle started on the municipal level, where access to political powers is much easier due to the absence of permanent political structures and reached a potential that conceivably could make itself felt on the Provincial and Federal levels.

Several factors facilitated this process. The British national pride and imperial enthusiasm faded with the passing of the empire. A more sophisticated, urban wave of immigration after the Second World War showed itself to be largely immune from the "institutional intimidation" so successfully applied to earlier generations. Their orientation was predominantly opportunistic and metropolitan, not ethnic to start with. The blandness of many anglophone institutions, and their relative lack of vitality, proved to provide opportunities for moderate advancement. With the Jews in a leading position due to their emphasis on education, a variety of ethnic individuals were rising in the stratificational

hierarchies of Canada, exerting their influence as they moved. It is more than 25 years since ethnic mayors were first elected in major Canadian cities. Jews, Germans, Ukrainians and other ethnics have risen to Provincial Premierships, became members of legislative bodies and held cabinet posts.

Relatively recent immigrants appeared as small businessmen, contractors and entrepreneurs; as craftsmen in the unions and as professionals in their respective organizations. The rapid urbanization in Canada aided these groups in that it provided the environment in which they encountered competitive advantages. Regardless of their ethnic origins these individuals not only began to exert pressure from below on the Canadian mobility structure but began to reinterpret and transform francophone and anglophone institutions. More subtly than dramatically, but nonetheless relentlessly the Canadian scene was subjected to change. The basically Protestant character of English Canada which gave it a distinctive puritan flavour drastically changed into a metropolitan, diverse direction during the last few decades.

The early anglophone domination of industry went by default to the Americans who immigrated under corporate labels, to become permanent administrators of foreign-owned industries, while the explosive growth of higher education, particularly in the arts and the social sciences, attracted a great number of foreign educators whose commitment to Canadian core institutions was questionable at best.

Without any overall design, different ethnic individuals at various levels in the political, economic and educational structures began to exert influences very different from the traditional anglo-saxon design. Although there was little danger of this power becoming concentrated in one group or channelled in one direction, it was sufficient to effect "creeping changes" which, compounded

over time, presented a challenge to the Canadian status quo.

What these various ethnic individuals were found to have in common, however, was the imposition of an ethnically stratified society where the majority had erected attitudinal and structural obstacles to the participation of ethnics. The removal of these obstacles was and still is the paramount interest of all ethnics and constitutes the subject matter around which the mobilization of ethnic powers is possible.

The threat of these rising ethnics was most immediately felt by the francophones because theirs is a society threatened for the last two hundred years and traditional response patterns against culturally threatening situations were readily available. The increased self-assertion of francophones in the late 1950's and 1960's brought to the fore traditional and national attitudes and ideologies. And the tolerance limit toward ethnic groups is usually very low under national and traditional perspectives.

On the part of the anglophones, the early 1960's also gave rise to a renewed version of the ideology of Canadian nationalism, which initially dwelt heavily on anti-Americanism but spread to include immigration policy, education and economic issues. Amorphous and ill-defined as the new Canadian nationalism was, it nevertheless became an expression of concern regarding the direction in which Canadian society was moving.

The ideological perspective from which the B. & B. Commission proceeded therefore was very much compatible with these conservative nationalistic reactions in French and English Canada. The main objective of the commission therefore was to reassert the dominance of the two cultures and to justify and legitimize this dominance through appropriate symbols, assumptions and ideas.

Being fully aware of the fact, that dominance is only enforceable as long as it is acknowledged through the compliance of those dominated, a modernized policy to elicit such compliance from the ethnics of Canada had to be found. Multiculturalism is this policy by which the compliance of Canada's ethnic population to the bilingual policies of the Federal Government was to be bought.

By explicitly recognizing ethnic contributions to Canada's development, multiculturalism updated and modernized the earlier forms of "institutional intimidation" which perceived the contributions in opposite ways. That Canada had bestowed its institutional greatness on immigrants who had to prove that they were worthy of it.

But it retained those elements of the old policy that were essential to establish the claim to bicultural dominance: the emphasis of descent in the definition of ethnic groups and by implication the emphasis of descent in regard to bicultural membership. The emphasis of individual identity as the essence of ethnic groups belongingness and by implication the unaltering distinction between members of the "founding races" and the ethnics.

By going no further than that, the Canadian reality as to the structural position of ethnic groups in society remained essentially unexplored and was hardly mentioned in the B. & B. report. In this way it was possible to continue denying any political and economic reality to ethnic groups and thereby excluding ethnic groups from consideration in the exercise of institutional powers.

By failing to systematically explore the structural conditions which limit the life chances of members of ethnic groups, the commission was able to ignore the fact that ethnic group emancipation is the principle means by which the life chances of individual ethnics is enhanced. Thus it could deny by omission any political and economic reality to ethnic groups and thereby obscure the struggle

for institutional powers by which these groups conceivably can advance.

Today, as in the days long past, the leaders of ethnic groups who show the right kind of deference are being bought off with political recognition, patronage and multicultural grants rendering them incapable and unwilling to formulate ethnic interests and to organize ethnic attitudes into ethnic social movements, with the aim of establishing an ethnic power base. At least this is the fate of the majority of ethnic groups.

What multiculturalism offered to the ethnic individual was the liberal illusion of "Cultural Freedom" where the acquisition of one of the two official languages was regarded as sufficient to assure the individual's full participation in the dominant cultures. This "Cultural Freedom" of Canadians, the former Prime Minister said when introducing the policy of Multiculturalism, should help break down discriminatory attitudes and cultural jealousies. National unity must be founded on confidence in one's own individual identity; out of this can grow respect for that of others and a willingness to share ideas, attitudes and assumptions.[12]

It is hardly possible to disagree with the sentiments as expressed by the former Prime Minister. It is an entirely different question however, whether or not these sentiments or their realization do have any empirical bases in Canadian society. The ethnics of Western Canada have spoken English for at least two generations and in spite of it have hardly been allowed to share the ideas, attitudes, assumptions — and powers — of the anglophones who so successfully managed to contain them. The legislative lyrics of Trudeau create the false notion that language acquisition is all that is needed to pass into mainstream Canada, where free cultural sharing of all involved is possible. The myth of multiculturalism is based on high-sounding liberal ideals not on the empirical

reality of Canadian society, where ethnicity is a very concrete factor limiting the life chances of its members. It recognizes ethnic groups as sources of individual identity and as cultural groups preserving quaint remnants of folklore and customs. It advocates societal mobility of the ethnic individual while retarding the advancement of ethnic groups by which such advancement ultimately is facilitated. At the most it advocates some laudable attitudes toward human rights without providing the ways and means by which they are attained.

The real goal of this policy is the reiteration of the one hundred year old practice of articulating Canada's national goals in terms of the interests of the political and economic elite of Ontario and Quebec — renamed and modernized as bilingualism and biculturalism.

As has been the case for a century, the rest of the country, its regions and its ethnics are presumed to be bought off by a process of political and economic bargaining by which their compliance with these policies can be obtained, renamed and modernized under multiculturalism.

The maintenance of Canadian unity, so it is claimed, depends on this constant reequilibrating of the dominant interests in Ontario and Quebec. From the Quebec Act of 1774 to the report of the Task Force on Canadian unity two hundred years later, Canadian politics have been dominated by the creation of one political model after another by which these bicultural differences and interests were supposed to be balanced without ever finding a lasting solution. In the process of this bicultural political horsetrading, Canada acquired a stultifying legacy of political and economic mediocrity. The overblown cultural sensitivities on both sides; the endless stretching of real and imaginary forms of relative deprivation by the adversaries; the constant necessity of petty compromises produced a Federal political elite that only can think small. It consists of professional

power brokers without ideas, courage and leadership. This group is matched by a National economic elite whose incompetence is best demonstrated by having offered the country's resources and its national economy for sale to the highest bidder.

Maintaining the fragile national unity on the basis of these bicultural models has cost Canada the vitality and the enterprising spirit of its people who exhausted themselves in successive bicultural confrontations and thereby prevented them from gaining the freedom of action, the vision and the initiative to develop this country to its physical and human potential.

It has cost this country its flexibility and speed of action which in a quickly changing world are essential for survival. It has imposed on Canada the burden of inefficiency and complacency with its deadly effect on the life of society. Most of all it has prevented Canada from formulating national goals derived from the talents and aspirations of its many peoples' and the natural resources at their disposal; goals which were to be a true reflection of their vital approaches to life and society.

Instead, Canada has been horsetrading for the preservation of an obsolete political structure, for an empty political shell derived from colonial conquests whose internal contradictions led to the mutual retardation of all for the benefit of none but a few.

Up until recently, the high costs of this fragile union could be charged against the enormous national wealth of Canada. This account, however, is running dry. The reduction of distributable wealth already has impoverished the powerless of this country and is slowly but unequally catching up with the rest.

The francophones of Quebec for reasons of their own were always ambiguous about the Canadian union but only recently have they acquired the means to do

something about it. The organization of different social classes and interest groups in Quebec whether successfully completed by Rene Levesque, Claude Ryan or any as yet unknown politician, has begun in earnest and this trend is irreversible. The emerging Quebec collectivity which eventually will carry the banner of national self-determination almost certainly will be an alliance of diverse groups bound together by national sentiments. It will attain its political, economic and cultural goals because the rest of Canada has neither the conviction to conduct a civil war over the problem, nor to endure a Northern Ireland calamity because of it.

Where does this leave the ethnic groups in the rest of Canada? With the successful organization of a national Quebec collectivity, the bicultural policy of the Federal government is dead, irrespective of the type of political solution by which Quebec achieves its goals.

Dead also is the government's policy of multiculturalism old and new that for so long has dominated the life of ethnic group members.

What ethnic groups must concern themselves with urgently is the role which they intend to play in the reconstruction of Canada after Quebec has gone its own way. Such a task asks for wisdom, courage, patience and foresight. It calls for justice and fairness and a vision of a better Canada for all. Neither ethnic narrow-mindedness nor political ignorance will do. Most of all it requires a basis of power from which ethnics can influence the course this country will take in the future. And this power base can not be built by the "professional ethnics" that gather to collect the multicultural handouts with which the present ethnic leadership is bribed into compliance. It takes a great deal more effort, honesty, intelligence and commitment to a better Canada to tackle such a task.

True multiculturalism therefore is the mobilization of intellectual resources and political powers on the part of all ethnic groups put into the service of revitalizing and reconstructing a Canada for the 21st century — a Canada that is built by all for the benefit of all.

FOOTNOTES

1. Jean Burnet, "The Definition of Multiculturalism in a Bilingual Framework", Paper presented at the Conference on Multiculturalism and Third World Immigrants, Edmonton, September 1975.

2. As quoted in "Multiculturalism as State Policy" Second Canadian Conference on Multiculturalism Ottawa, February 1976, pg. 55. Although this quote allegedly is taken from Jean Burnet's paper quoted under 1, a version of this paper available to the author does not contain this passage.

3. House of Commons Debates, 1971. Statement of Prime Minister Trudeau, October 8th.

4. Jean Burnet, op.cit.,pg. 16.

5. Jean Burnet, op.cit., pg. 16,17.

6. W. W. Isajiw, "Olga In Wonderland: Ethnicity in Technological Society", Canadian Ethnic Studies, Vol. IX, No.1, 1977.

7. Ibid., pg. 80.

8. N. Glaser and D.P. Moynihan (eds.), Ethnicity, Theory and Experience, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pg. 7.

9. Bernardo Berdichewsky,"Class and Ethnic Consciousness: The Case of the Mapuche Indians in Chile," in Perspectives on Ethnicity, Mouton Publishers, the Hague, Paris, 1978, pg. 387.

10. Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, Book IV. See under "terms of reference".

11. Ibid.,

12. Op.cit., House of Commons Debates.